



**GCE**

**Film Studies**

Advanced GCE **A2 H467**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H067**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2014**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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## F631 Film Text and Context

### General Comments:

The quality of candidates' responses, the range of questions attempted and the range of films studied has grown considerably from the first sitting of this unit in summer 2013 – all of which was very pleasing to see.

There was very considerable diversity of films studied as the basis for responses to the questions in Section A, demonstrating that centres and candidates are using the flexibility that the specification affords. As was mentioned in last year's report, this again shows a very pleasing engagement with the letter and the spirit of the specification. Texts used for discussion included *V for Vendetta*, *Children of Men*, *Fish Tank*, *My Brother The Devil*, *Shifty*, *No Country For Old Men*, *The Proposition*, *Inception*, *Inside Man*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *Grown Ups*, *This Is England*, *Animal Kingdom*, *District 9*, *Black Swan*, *The Departed*, *Moon*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Hot Fuzz*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Super 8*, *Skyfall*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Hanna*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Monsters*, *Attack The Block*, *Juno*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Stardust*, *Golden Compass*, *Brighton Rock*, *Bullet Boy*, *Sinister*, *Let Me In*, *Inception*, *Looper*, *The Dark Knight*, *The Woman In Black*, *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark*, *The Descent*, *Sin City*, *Brick*, *Zombieland* and *True Grit*. This list shows the considerable diversity of genres, and film-making styles which centres have embraced with this unit. This diversity – across the range of the whole cohort and centre level - has enabled candidates to answer the questions in Section A with conviction and knowledge, as will be discussed further below. The diversity of films studied is made clear above, however, as advice / reminder for centres and candidates, due care should be exercised in determining what combinations of films are taken forward as the basis for examination responses. Some of the more effective combinations of films in this session included *Inception and Looper*, *Sin City and Brick*, *Skyfall and Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum / Hanna* and *Zombieland and True Grit*. Centres and candidates are advised to be clear about the rationale they employ for choosing the films they study.

In Section A, there was a preference for Q1 over Q2. Regardless of choice here, when candidates firmly addressed the terms of the question and directly used evidence from the films they had studied, high quality work emerged. This is a point of examination housekeeping which centres and candidates should fully bear in mind as they prepare for future examination sessions. With regard to Section B, the most popular topics were the rise of the blockbuster, format wars and multiplexes and developments in 21<sup>st</sup> Century cinema and film. However, it is very pleasing to report that both of the other two topics available - Early Cinema and The Impact of World War II on British cinema have become more popular than in the previous session. The strengths and weaknesses of different approaches taken to the different questions and topics are discussed below.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

#### Section A

##### Question 1

The question addressed one of the seven Frameworks For Analysis described in the specification, namely genre. On the whole, the question was proficiently handled by candidates – the majority of candidates who responded to this question were able to identify what they considered to be the key codes and conventions of the genres of the films they had studied and they were able to support this with reference to aspects of their selected texts. One of the characteristics of better responses was the clear ability to communicate what the wider codes and conventions of the genre(s) is (are) and then argue to what extent the chosen films

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employed these codes and conventions. What was of a more variable quality across the cohort was the ability to apply technical knowledge and understanding of the elements of film language to these chosen aspects, however the quality of such analysis has improved from the previous session overall. Centres and candidates are urged to remember that this skill is vital in determining level of success in the examination. Where candidates could discuss a range of technical terms and sustain such an approach across their response, they were appropriately rewarded for this essential element of a film studies response.

An area for development with some candidates is the spread of their analysis across the films – seeking to focus on two or three key sequences within each film in the examination, and seeking to move away from descriptive writing and/or focusing on one part of the chosen films.

### Question 2

The question addressed one of the seven Frameworks For Analysis described in the specification, namely authorship. With this question, the critical factor in determining the success of candidates' responses here rested upon the degree to which candidates engaged with the question set and the degree to which the candidate attempted more general commentary circulating around auteur theory. The statement in the quotation inspired considerable debate by candidates, and thus acted well as a lever to open up a debate over film authorship. Three broad approaches were taken by candidates – the statement was agreed with and texts were discussed to demonstrate the veracity of the quotation, the statement was disagreed and texts were used to show up the limitations of the claim in the quotation. The third approach was to agree and disagree with reference to different films studied. Each of these approaches was valid provided candidates were able to argue their case, supporting this with precise reference to aspects of the film studied. Whilst it was very pleasing to see real engagement with aspects of film theory in these responses, centres and candidates are advised to be able to counter-balance such theoretical claims against developing an understanding of the detail and sophistication of the processes and tasks involved in producing films. Additionally, candidates should be encouraged to seek to locate film authors in a variety of places – director, screenwriters, producers, actors, authors of adapted works (eg J K Rowling as author of the Harry Potter franchise) – and also the audience in arguably financially determining future productions through economic signals such as box office takings.

As with question 1, there was a more variable quality across the cohort due to the differing ability of candidates to apply technical knowledge and understanding of the elements of film language to these chosen aspects. Where candidates could discuss a range of technical terms and sustain such an approach across their response, they were appropriately rewarded for this essential element of a film studies response.

### Section B

#### Early Cinema (1895–1915)

For those centres whose candidates offered responses to this topic, Q3 proved to be a popular choice. Pleasing features of such responses were the degree to which candidates could open up a debate and engage with the quotation within the time that they have. The majority of candidates recognised that there were a variety of relevant factors and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding with detailed and accurate use of historical information.

With regards to Q4, candidates were on the whole able to demonstrate a good, accurate command of relevant historical knowledge. Films such as *Life Of An American Fireman*, *The Great Train Robbery* and *A Trip To The Moon* were the cornerstones of many successful responses. The better responses were ones that used aspects of the films as objects for debate about the importance of technological change in the development of storytelling. This was pleasing to see and enabled candidates to marshal coherent responses to the question. A

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characteristic of less successful responses was to omit this type of debate and fall into a more descriptive account of aspects of the films, thus losing sight of how Section B differentiates from Section A.

### **The impact of World War II on British cinema (1939–45)**

This topic proved to be considerably more popular than was the case in the previous examination session. A generally pleasing feature of many responses to Q5 was the accuracy of relevant historical knowledge and the ability of candidates to use this knowledge to make an argument which firmly addressed the terms of the question. From this, a very pleasing level of knowledge and understanding of the variety of sociological factors for the high level of cinema attendances emerged.

Q6 elicited many responses where candidates were very happy to agree with the view expressed in the question about British cinema as a propaganda tool. For candidates who did not counter-balance this view by exploring to what extent British cinema was not a propaganda tool, then there is an area for development. It was very clear that the candidates who responded to this question were well prepared to do so and it was very clear that many candidates had watched films from the period – a useful part of teaching and learning for this topic. However, some candidates described and offered elements of textual analysis of such films – where this was without connection to other factors pertaining to production, distribution and exhibition, such responses were of limited relevance to the question set. As was mentioned above, Section B requires different types of responses than Section A which is geared towards textual analysis. To re-iterate a point from the report from the previous session - “While it is important that candidates have some means to exemplify the points made in their responses by discussing certain films, wholesale textual analysis does not enable candidates to achieve marks easily, as the application of the mark scheme does not allow for such responses. The difference between the two sections of the unit are delineated in the specification and, where necessary, centres should re-familiarise themselves with the relevant details in this regard.”

### **The rise of the blockbuster, format wars and multiplexes (1972–84)**

As was the case in the previous session, this was one of the more popular topics in this section. Q7 proved to be a popular choice with candidates, and their responses made clear that they had been generally well prepared for this topic. On the whole, candidates were clear on the key factors here and many candidates could clearly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of relevant films from the period. Some candidates were able to situate the developments in American cinema in the 1970s into a longer historical perspective, in some cases, some candidates referred back to the late 1940s and the process of ‘divorcement’ which Hollywood studios were subjected to. Film such as *The Godfather*, *Jaws* and *Star Wars* and the conditions for the success of these underpinned many strong responses to this question. A key feature of better responses was the ability to link the success of one film to another – identifying causal correlations between success of one film to another, showing how distributors and exhibitors learnt successful approaches from one film to another.

Candidates who responded to Q8 were generally able to marshal a range of relevant facts – such as the declining physical conditions of the ‘fleapit cinemas’ and the destabilising factor of the phenomena of mass unemployment in the early 1980s – as being partly responsible for the decline in attendance figures in this period. This linking of macro to micro factors was very pleasing to see, and shows that advice offered in the previous sessions’ report in this regard have been utilised.

## Developments in 21<sup>st</sup> Century cinema and film (2000 – present)

As with the previous session, this proved to be a very popular topic area. Q9 proved to be a very popular choice with candidates. The quotation worked well in inspiring candidates to open up a debate, with candidates offering some firm opinions on both sides. The majority of candidates recognised the role of internet piracy in online film distribution, while some candidates recognised the role of legal means of online distribution also. Such responses discussed the services of Netflix, Amazon Instant Video and iTunes particularly, and there was some discussion of the price differential between using such services versus cinema ticket prices, and how the relatively high cost of cinema ticket prices (as compared to monthly subscription fees to streaming services) may well pose a long term threat to cinema. However, discussions of films which have been simultaneously released online and cinema – such as *A Field In England* – were relatively few. The distribution strategies being utilised for films such as this and the formation of YouTube channels which charge for access to films – as is the case with Ken Loach’s Sixteen Films for example, are a key part of the online distribution mix and centres are advised to explore such strategies accordingly.

With regard to Q10, the success of *Avatar* continues to loom large, with the vast majority of responses to this question mentioning the film somewhere in the answer. Characteristics of strong responses handled *Avatar* in almost historical way – questioning whether the success of that film will represent the high point of 3D; other strong responses noted how that film used production technologies in different ways to other films which are ‘retro-fitted’ for 3D and how this process leads to an unequal finished product for 3D films and how this is then perceived by consumers. Other candidates discussed the pricing structures for 3D films – many candidates expressed the view that such ticket prices are too high and thus a deterrent to consumers and that this might act as a long term threat to 3D. In last year’s report the following comment was made – “Disappointingly, there was scant evidence of candidates personalising their responses more and considering their own consumption or otherwise of 3D films” – thus it was pleasing to see that candidates are now able to offer more personalised responses.

## Sociological / Economic / Technological contexts

The advice below is a re-iteration of the same advice as from the previous report; centres and candidates who have responded to this advice have improved the quality of the responses offered in this session.

The better answers across all of the Section B responses explicitly addressed one or more of these contexts, as candidates determined what was most relevant from their learning and adapted to answer the questions set.

Centres are advised to use these contexts to help frame tasks inside and outside of the classroom and in so doing, candidates will then begin to generate material from their research can help them better contextualise issues and perhaps personalise their learning more. Some practical ways that this aspiration can be put into practice is signposted in the scheme of work available on the OCR website.

## General Advice to Centres

Section A – develop the candidates’ technical knowledge and understanding alongside their understanding of the films and the seven Frameworks For Analysis. Technical prowess is integral to high performance in the exam. Also, ensure that candidates are able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the films studied through being able to write about different aspects of those films. One tool in achieving this is through regular use of timed responses.

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Section B – enable candidates to personalise and make concrete the work of the topics – regardless of which of the four topics they study. Candidates need to be able to construct arguments in the exam, and to enable them to do so fully, they need greater personal/local evidence to help over and above to what may be learned from reading books and websites. Whilst watching films or extracts from film from the periods being studied will help to consolidate candidates knowledge and understanding, it needs to be remembered that such work is a dimension of study for this topic, but detailed textual analysis is not required for questions to this topic and the mark scheme offers no facility for rewarding textual analysis in this section.

## **F632 Foundation Portfolio in Film**

### **Administration**

The administration of this component by the majority of centres was excellent, with marks and work being submitted on time. Most centres completed coursework cover sheets thoroughly, with detailed comments outlining how and why the marks were allocated. A number of centres would benefit from being more explicit in justifying why certain marks were awarded. The majority of centres submitted work as physical folders which were suitably presented; Centres which submitted work online would be advised to do so using a blog hub which greatly aids the moderation process and is good practice.

Most centres were very clear about how and why marks had been awarded and avoided using subjective comments or just statements copied and pasted straight from the assessment criteria. Comments should clearly indicate how the individual candidates work meets the assessment criteria as this makes it clear as to how the centre have applied the criteria as well as making the moderation process more straightforward.

The video work was often submitted as individual discs which can make the moderation process more challenging as moderators are constantly switching between discs. Separate discs were often used for the different elements of the coursework. It would be useful in future if the work of an individual candidate could be on a single disc, it would be ideal if the complete work of a centre could be put onto a single disc. Please continue to make sure video work is submitted in suitable formats.

### **Quality of marking**

Application of the criteria was generally close to the agreed standard, though some centres tended to be over-generous with specific elements. Harsh marking was very rare. In terms of the textual analysis, most centres are assessing candidates in the right levels, however, centres often seemed to be over-marking the planning. It was clear that if candidates had appeared to complete set tasks then this was rewarded as opposed to rewarding the actual quality of the work. Moderators often saw very basic planning being rewarded with marks in a higher level. This included badly framed storyboards and out of focus shots as well as minimal detail about the links to the textual analysis.

The variety of the creative artefacts produced was pleasing and the majority of centres were accurately rewarding high quality work. The centres producing the script and key frames need to make sure that candidates demonstrate consistently high levels of appropriate production skills to justify awarding Level 4 marks. This includes the ability to frame and focus still images as well as using appropriate landscape formatting. Centres also need to use master script formatting for the screenplay extract and candidates are advised to study professional examples to assist them in the creation of their own. The video work produced was mixed but was often accurately awarded the correct level. Again, where work was over marked it was due to a lack of excellent production skills.

Evaluations varied in approach with the majority of candidates submitting an essay style write up of their work and progress. Centres need to make sure that candidates address all the set questions.

## **Candidates' work**

This is the second year for the specification and moderators were pleased with the diversity of work produced and the choice of films being used in the textual analysis work. The wide range of films selected is in keeping with the spirit of the specification. All candidates would benefit from clear guidance being given on the correct ways to format planning, and the importance of this being carried out prior to the production of the creative artefact as opposed to after the production.

## **Textual analysis**

Candidates chose a wide variety of films to analyse and these were often carefully chosen and facilitated the textual analysis. The most successful work demonstrated a clear sense of engagement with the texts and made insightful links between the micro-technical elements and the contextual macro elements. This was often supported by the use of screen grabs to help illustrate the point being made and this visual stimulus proved to be useful in allowing candidates to make direct links between the two films.

The candidates whose textual analysis focused on small extracts from the whole film were able to gain appropriate marks for terminology due to the close analysis of micro-technical elements. As with the close focus on an extract the candidates who used one or two frameworks of analysis tended to produce more coherent and focused pieces of writing. This approach should be encouraged.

A number of candidates had tried to shoehorn in specific film theory, often rather clumsily. It is better if candidates are aware of the broader concepts of film theory and use these as a looser framework as opposed to trying to fit in theory.

It was clear that, where centres and candidates had considered the whole portfolio from the start, the choice of films for the textual analysis provided a clear and constant thread which linked all the elements and allowed a cohesive portfolio of work to be produced.

## **Planning**

The range and quality of planning was varied, with some candidates producing lots of focused and detailed material, whilst others had obviously produced storyboard after the construction of the creative artefact.

The better work made explicit links to the impact of the textual analysis and how the candidates' work had been influenced by the films analysed. Equally, a number of candidates' work appeared to be just a functional exercise which had been completed to meet the criteria, with minimal influence from the textual analysis or any impact on the creative artefact.

Candidates producing the location reports often seemed to ignore them when making the creative artefact or chose to include badly focused and framed images. It is vital that candidates realise the importance of planning and the need for it to be presented in a suitable format. A number of candidates who produced hand drawn storyboards did not always use appropriate figure shape to illustrate blocking within the frame, stick figures do not constitute good planning.

Candidates producing the screen test notes often benefitted from having a clear rationale in the notes about what type of character they are after as well as some idea of the direction given. This is an approach which could be developed in future sessions.

It should also be remembered that a synopsis should be brief and provide a snapshot of what the whole film will be about as opposed to a detailed breakdown.

## **Creative artefact**

There was a fairly even split between centres submitting filmed sequences and script and key frames. The quality of work produced in both areas was mixed.

The best filmed sequences had benefitted from clear planning and an understanding of technical conventions linked to the textual analysis. Where this was evident, candidates had produced excellent work which was sophisticated and also demonstrated excellent application of production skills. The film sequences which were less successful did not demonstrate the same technical excellence and in some cases did not frame shots properly or manage to hold a shot steady. If centres choose to offer the filmed sequence they would benefit from highlighting the need for basic technical competence. In a number of cases, the filmed sequences were marked generously and into Level 4 when the work did not always merit it.

As with the filmed sequences there was excellent work produced in the script and key frame approach. Again, as with the filmed sequence, candidates who used the appropriate formatting for the script tended to produce work of a higher standard. These candidates also managed to relate their key frames clearly to the prior planning. In a number of cases the marks awarded for the key frames tended to be over generous especially where frames were repeated or suffered due to poor composition and lighting. Better examples of the key frames included carefully constructed set ups and used costume and depth of field effectively.

Centres should also be aware of the suitability of the content produced, a number of artefacts featured replica weapons or drug use. Whilst these elements often appeal to the candidates producing the work, their use should be actively discouraged and more creative solutions to genre representation found.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluations are an element that would benefit from more focus. It is important that candidates do more than just describe what they have done without much sense of evaluating its success or otherwise. A significant number of candidates produced Level 2 responses which were brief and underdeveloped. Often, the evaluations lacked any film specific terminology or links back to the textual analysis. The fourth question about the success of the artefact was often the most poorly answered and usually in a very superficial way. The better candidates were able to make clear and insightful points about how all elements of their portfolio linked together and this approach is to be encouraged.

All submitted evaluations were written and often presented as a continuous piece of writing. The specification does not state the format in which the evaluation should be presented so it may be beneficial for centres to consider the way this is presented in future sessions. Evaluations could be presented as an audio commentary, a video presentation or through a mix of approaches. Centres would benefit from considering how the evaluation is delivered and structured in order to access the full range of Levels. It is vital that all candidates answer all four questions in order to access the full range of marks. Candidates would also benefit from including screen grabs of their own work to help illustrate their points.

Centres are reminded that all the elements are meant to interlink and inform each part of the process. It is also expected that differentiation takes place within centres particularly in the marking of the individual elements. Finally, teachers are encouraged to supervise, facilitate and monitor projects and to advise on the work produced rather than just mark it.

## F633 Global Cinema and Critical Perspectives

### General Comments:

This was the first sitting of the A2 paper for this specification and despite a small entry, there were clear examples of excellent practice by some centres and engagement with the spirit of the specification. A range of texts, case studies and approaches were undertaken. In Section A, a variety of texts from differing contexts included *La Haine*, *A Prophet*, *Amelie*, *City of God*, *Tsotsi*, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, *Battle Royale*, *Gojira*, *Pans Labyrinth* and *Amores Perros*. In Section B, all sections were covered but Authorship was most popular with fewer candidates attempting the topic area of Film Regulation.

Overall the quality of responses for Section A was often higher than those for Section B where centres are reminded to take note of the case study approach to the topics in a contemporary framework. Centres are also reminded that at A2 students should be engaging with the wider contexts in Section A and critical approaches to the topic areas in Section B.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

#### Question No. 1

##### Section A:

The question focused on the macro framework of representation and specifically how time and place are used to communicate key messages and values. Successful candidates were able to compare their chosen texts with confidence and debate the role of time and place in communicating key messages. Centres, where students had clearly engaged with a range of contextual issues that influenced the films and the period of time in which they were made, were able to confidently make links to these and often achieve marks in Level 4. Developing their skills from AS, successful candidates were also able to support their points with detailed micro evidence to gain high marks for evidence and terminology. Some candidates chose to argue that other macro frameworks, such as narrative or style, were in fact more important than time and place when conveying messages and values. This was valid when clearly argued and supported with micro evidence.

Weaker responses often did not sufficiently address the set question and/or support points with examples and evidence. Several candidates made no reference to wider contexts and whilst they could discuss the messages with confidence this prevented them from accessing the higher mark bands. Some centres appeared to focus heavily on skills of textual analysis but their candidates demonstrated limited understanding of messages and values linked to the macro frameworks. Some weaker responses also focused on just the opening sequence of the films studied leading to a limited range of examples or understanding of the texts as a whole. Centres are reminded that they do not need to focus on more than two key texts for Section A, but these must be studied in their entirety and explored with reference to their wider historical, social and political contexts.

##### Section B:

This section was approached by a small number of centres with a fairly even split across the two questions.

**Question No. 2**

This question focused on the impact of technology on regulatory practices. There were a few excellent responses that engaged well with the question and the impact that technology can have on production, exhibition and most significantly, the distribution of films which are banned or restricted. These strong responses used a variety of contemporary examples of both texts and practices which were relevant to the question. For example, the banning of popular illegal streaming sites such as *Primewire* and *The Pirate Bay* in the UK earlier this year by ISPs and how audiences may still get around issues of access through hotspot shields. Better candidates also engaged in the debate in the question and provided arguments to support the need for regulation to protect the vulnerable. Overall, those who provided a sense of debate, some reference to critical approaches (or criticisms of these) and frequent examples were able to access the higher mark bands. Weaker responses were more common sense and opinion-based with perhaps out-dated examples and little relevance to the issue of technology. It is also good practice for candidates to engage with regulatory practices outside of the UK. The US, China, Iran, Australia and South Korea were all good examples of countries with regulatory practice which contrasted with the UK and to which the better candidates made reference.

**Question 3**

This question was about the impact of wider social changes on regulation and was attempted by some candidates. Strong responses discussed the shift of the BBFC to a more advisory role due to social changes and compared them with stricter regulation systems and/or censorship in countries such as China or Iran. Stronger candidates discussed the role of cultural sensitivities to issues such as sex in China and South Korea and terrorism in the US post 9/11. Many of the most successful candidates also explored how particular films were classified differently across different countries and linked these to wider social issues.

**Question 4**

This was one of the most popular questions in Section B and many candidates attempted this with varying success. The question encouraged candidates to engage with the relevance of authorship in contemporary cinema. Many candidates approached this by discussing auteurs in contemporary cinema. Examples cited included Tim Burton, Wes Anderson, Christopher Nolan, Sofia Coppola, Quentin Tarantino and Martin Scorsese. Better candidates used a range of examples to argue that these could be considered auteurs and that this served as important marketing tool. Some responses discussed how particular directors had developed when moving from independent to mainstream cinema, such as Christopher Nolan. Many candidates were able to make reference to auteur and authorship theory and argue how relevant this was to their case studies. Other candidates chose to argue that authorship was not significant in contemporary mainstream cinema and cited *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight* series success as examples of how sequels and marketing had a clear drive in box office and global success. Some also argued that genre and star power were more relevant in contemporary cinema. Weaker responses failed to engage with the issue of 'contemporary' and some dated examples were offered such as the star power of Will Smith in *Hitch*. Others used a limited range of examples and seemed to textually analyse the films of certain directors which is not required in Section B. Centres are reminded that Section B is about engaging in contemporary debates and using relevant examples from films to support the arguments which candidates make.

**Question 5**

Very few candidates attempted this question.

**Film and Audience Experience****Question 6**

This question was a popular one and there was a range of responses to the question of spectator responses. Better candidates discussed how audience expectations could be challenged by films which use experimental form and narrative such as *The Tree of Life*. Others discussed how emotional responses to film, in particular to violence, could be affected by previous viewing experiences. The role of fans and fandom was discussed, with conviction by some candidates, and the extent to which expectations can be fulfilled or challenged. Other strong responses included the impact of gender and/or ethnicity on spectator response with *Black Swan* used confidently by some candidates. Successful candidates were able to link their points and examples to critical approaches and confidently discuss the issues in the question. Weaker responses lacked critical engagement and used a limited range of examples to discuss the question set.

**Question 7**

Overall, responses to this question were quite limited and seemed to lack the critical underpinning and detailed examples of other questions. Many candidates provided an overly common sense response. Other responses seemed to lose the focus of the question and merely discussed the pros and cons of technology in the film industry. Some, more solid responses, considered the role of technology in differing viewing conditions and the collective versus the personal. Some candidates also discussed arguments that other factors are much more significant in affecting audience response than technology such as expectations and marketing and fans/fandom. Overall candidates should consider the role of technology on emotional, cognitive and sensory experiences. They could also consider how CGI/3D can create hyper realism and the impact of this on spectators/audiences. Additionally, candidates could explore the impact of film consumption through watching on portable mobile devices, and how the experience of watching films in this way can lead to different responses to watching films on other platforms.

**General Advice to Centres:****Section A**

Ensure that candidates are fully prepared to discuss the wider contexts which influence the message and values in the films studied. Historical, social and political issues in the country at the time of production are fundamental to students' understanding of the texts and how they operate.

Textual analysis and use of film terminology is important in this section and candidates should provide a balanced discussion of their two key texts with frequent reference to evidence.

**Section B**

Exploring the key issues detailed in the bullet points of the specification for each area and ensuring that candidates have relevant, detailed and up to date knowledge is essential. Textual analysis should be geared to building knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied and not an end in itself. For example, if candidates are studying the topic of regulation and classification, then any textual analysis work should be geared to building understanding of these issues. Critical approaches must be explored and candidates should argue the relevance of these approaches in relation to a contemporary context and the examples they have studied.

## F634 Creative Investigation in Film

This was the first session for Unit F634. It was pleasing to see how well centres responded to the requirements of the specification and encouraged their candidates to produce a thoughtful and varied range of research projects. There were some very successful portfolios where candidates had clearly considered areas which had arisen from their study of film during the AS/A2 course and had followed their personal interests.

### Administration

Administration by most centres was excellent. Marks were submitted and samples arrived on time. In the majority of cases assessment forms were completed thoroughly with clear indication from the centre as to how and why marks were awarded. Some centres used written annotations on the work which were specifically linked to the assessment criteria; this also helped the moderator to see where marks had been awarded. There were some subjective comments relating to how hard the candidate had worked but these were supported with comments linked to the assessment criteria. On the whole, centres made good use of the assessment criteria when making their comments and this is to be commended. There were a few inaccuracies on the front of the assessment sheets; some were missing candidate numbers and, more importantly, blog addresses. Centres should check the assessment forms thoroughly ensuring that all the details are correct before they are submitted. The majority of centres used the interactive forms which helped avoid clerical errors and made comments easy to read.

Work was submitted in a variety of formats. Many centres submitted paper based portfolios and supplied the filmed unit on disk. Some centres used blogs or free websites such as wix.com to present all or some of their work. When combining paper based and online work it would be helpful to the moderation process if centres clearly indicated where work could be found for each assessed element. Blogs were used successfully by most centres and were easy to navigate; however, for some candidates it was unclear to which element the post related. The blog addresses for some candidates were not supplied on the assessment form and on one occasion the link went to the work of the wrong candidate. Centres should check all links and addresses before submitting their sample. Some centres used a central hub with links to all candidates' blogs, which is excellent practice. There was one instance of filmed work being submitted on a USB stick which is an unacceptable format as outlined on page 29 of the specification. If centres are unable to transfer work to disk then using a blog or free website would be an excellent alternative. Some centres provided the work of all candidates on one disk which is to be encouraged; this allows the moderator to easily access and identify the work of each candidate. If providing work on one disk, however, it is important that each piece of work is clearly labelled with the candidate's name and number.

### Research

Centres made well-judged assessments for the research element and recognised where candidates had produced Level 3 as opposed to Level 4 work. There were some examples of over-marking in the higher mark band and centres are advised to consider carefully the assessment criteria, especially when considering the contextualisation of the investigation. There was a wide range of research topics offered, many of which were clearly influenced by the candidates' study of film during their AS/A2 course. Some of the research topics offered were the portrayal of mental instability on screen, the influence of Alfred Hitchcock, female authorship in comedy, the representation of social inequality in science fiction and the influence of Christopher Nolan on audience experience. There was a good range of film texts studied including Memento, Black Swan, District 9, Elysium, Bridesmaids, Frances Ha, Dream House and The Machinist to name a few. Candidates who drew on the knowledge they had developed

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in other units had a good foundation on which to base their research and it was clear to see where their study during the course had fed into their research topics.

The best research topics had a clear hypothesis or series of research questions and clearly addressed the 6 bullet points on page 18 of the specification. One centre explicitly addressed each bullet point under separate headings and, although this is not a requirement, worked well; candidates were able to clearly outline the aims of their research and focus on their conclusion. Most candidates produced a written response to an essay style question with very few producing a series of research questions; it was sometimes difficult to identify where the candidate had addressed each bullet point, especially the introduction and the aims. The 'description of key texts both primary and secondary' was often limited to a list of sources at the end of the research, which counts as the bibliography and filmography and not a description of key texts. Some candidates gave descriptions of their primary sources but there were very few descriptions of secondary sources over and above the title and author.

Some research projects relied heavily on textual analysis of films, and although this is an important element of the research, it should be supported with evidence from secondary sources; some research projects were too similar to the textual analysis element at AS. Candidates are encouraged to research thoroughly their secondary sources to support their own primary investigations. Historical source material, such as Laura Mulvey's essay from the 1970s, was referred to by some candidates without considering how ideas may have changed since they were written. Candidates should therefore be encouraged to consider the historical context of their source material; this in itself should initiate some interesting research questions.

Some candidates had few secondary sources and most were articles from websites. Although the internet is a rich source of information, candidates should also be encouraged to use other secondary source material such as books, magazines, documentaries, dvd extras (even if these are accessed through an online source such as google books or the BFI website).

## **Planning**

Marking for the planning element was close to the agreed standard for this unit and the assessment criteria were used appropriately. Most centres adhered to the guidelines in the specification and produced the planning materials listed, however, there were some examples where candidates had not produced all the required materials; these candidates were marked accordingly. There were some excellent examples of planning which had substantial links to the candidate's investigation; in these portfolios it was evident that the creative realisation had been considered during the research process. A minority of candidates struggled to make a clear link between their research topic and their creative realisation. Centres are encouraged to discuss the creative realisation with their students during the research process. Most planning materials were presented in written format either on paper or on a blog. Some of the synopses for the filmed option were very brief, and although there is no set format for a synopsis, candidates may find it useful to their planning to adopt the 3 act model used for treatments. The treatments produced for the non-filmed option were largely successful with candidates using the correct structure, register and tense. There were examples, however, of candidates combining the treatment with the layout for the key frame stills. In the planning journey the treatment would come before the layout and therefore these should be separate planning materials. Storyboards varied in quality; most candidates produced hand-drawn storyboards using a template with separate boxes for comments on shot type and sound (although some candidates did not fill these in); there was one example of a digital storyboard which enabled the candidate to consider framing and composition.

Most candidates used templates for their recce reports, risk assessments and shooting/editing logs which worked well. More creative recce reports included location shots with detailed comments on the suitability of the location and how it could be used in their film.

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Casting considerations were presented as a written document accompanied with a photograph of the actor; the best examples included detailed information about the actor and their suitability for the role; however, there were some that were character descriptions rather than casting considerations. A small number of candidates considered more than one actor for the role which is to be encouraged as it replicates the professional process.

Most written scripts were presented in the correct format although there were a number that were not. There were some creative scripts including a successful comedy spoof and a Kurosawa-inspired piece, but some candidates struggled to write convincing or imaginative dialogue. Centres are encouraged to spend time teaching the skills required to write and format a film script.

### **Creative Realisation**

Marking for the creative realisation was slightly over generous especially in the higher mark bands with some work of Level 3 quality being awarded Level 4 marks. The non-filmed option was more popular in this session with the majority of candidates producing 20 key frames. Work was presented in a variety of formats; some candidates produced printed copies of their key frames, others posted them on blog sites and some were presented as an animatic with sound; all are acceptable formats. There were some excellent examples of candidates using Photoshop to create the desired lighting, focus and special effects for their key frames; this greatly enhanced the quality of the key frames and enabled the candidates to fulfil their creative aims. There were examples of key frames being produced in portrait format which does not replicate cinema framing; key frames should be in landscape format. Some of the printed key frames were also very small; to enable the moderator to clearly see the composition of the shots it is important that the key frames are a good size: no more than two per A4 page. Some candidates produced far more than 20 key frames which made it difficult to accurately assess the artefact; producing images for the whole film sequence can help the candidate to visualise their film but they must select 20 images which are key indicators of the narrative arc, characters, genre and/or style of the film. There were some unsuitable casting choices, especially in terms of age, which should be addressed at the planning stage when considering cast. In both the filmed option and the key frames an unnecessary number of shots were used by some candidates to show the same piece of action rather than employing ellipsis. The best examples of the filmed option demonstrated creative use of framing and shot composition; a clear consideration of mise en scène and location and well directed performances. This work was also typified by its close links to the findings of the research project. Centres are reminded that for health and safety reasons real or simulated weapons should not be used in a public place. Candidates should therefore not use them in their creative artefacts.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluations were mostly marked in line with the set national standard. All evaluations were submitted in essay style format. There were good examples of evaluations that personally engaged with the journey from research through planning to creative realisation. As stated in the specification, the evaluation should not be a description of how their realisation was made, however, some candidates described what they did and the problems they encountered without referring back to the aims of their creative realisation. Unlike at AS level there are no specific questions to address in the evaluation. Centres may find it helpful, however to encourage candidates to use their own questions to help structure their evaluations so they do not just describe the process; these are critical analysis skills they will have developed throughout the course.

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